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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the three "Voices for Illinois Children" newsletter issues published during 1999. Voices for Illinois Children is a child advocacy group that works to make kids "count" in Illinois and to ensure that the basic needs of all children, families, and communities are met. These newsletter issues explore topics pertaining to childrearing and children's well-being. The winter 1999 issue includes articles that address: (1) the Start Early legislative agenda; (2) the "Who are the Children of Illinois?" conference and development of the Children's Charter; (3) child care accreditation; (4) welfare reform; (5) Illinois learning standards; (6) strengthening the child care licensing system; and (7) the National Association of Child Advocates. The summer 1999 issue includes articles on: (1) progress toward the Children's Charter; (2) "Start Early" parent materials; (3) the definition of community; (4) preparing Chicago for the 21st century; (5) outreach efforts to help low-income families learn about key income support programs; (6) individual development accounts; and (7) legislative victories for the "Start Early" agenda. The fall 1999 issue includes articles on: (1) the "Start Early" conference and update on activities; (2) initiatives calling for investing tobacco settlement funds in community-driven initiatives to encourage children and youth to make good life choices; (3) the Illinois Family Partnership Network which helps parents develop a leading voice in Illinois; and (4) progress in the Charter for Illinois Children, including a copy of the charter. (KB)

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Voices for Illinois Children

Volume 11, Numbers 1-3

Winter-Fall 1999

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VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

VOICES

Inside Voices

- EITC
- NACA
- Kids Count Report
- ...and More!!!

Volume 11 Number 1 Winter 1999

Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth Legislative Agenda

A child's earliest years lay the foundation for future success in school and life, and this foundation is even stronger when a child has a nurturing environment and adequate resources. Recognizing the importance of these early years, Voices for Illinois Children and a variety of organizations around the state support the *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* Legislative Agenda to help more Illinois families build a strong foundation and provide positive experiences for their children.

Improve Access to Early Childhood Education

The foundation for learning is created in a child's first years. While more than 35 percent of Illinois children are under age six, less than three percent of the Illinois State Board of Education budget goes to early childhood education. About 30 percent of three and four-year-olds at risk of school failure are *not* served by state Pre-Kindergarten or Head Start.

- To help all children access quality early education, Illinois must make a 20 percent increase in the ISBE's Early Childhood Education Block Grant.

Strengthen New Families

Without support from families and communities, many new parents are unprepared for the challenge of raising children. **Healthy Families Illinois** is a *voluntary* program in which local family support workers visit new parents at home, and help to foster healthy parent-child relationships and connect families with vital community services. Studies show that voluntary home visiting helps improve child development and reduce child abuse and neglect.

- Illinois should invest in new families and expand this highly successful program by $4.5 million.

Support the "First Year at Home"

Learning begins at birth, and parents are a child's first teacher. Yet many low-income working parents are unable to stay at home during the crucial first year of a baby's life and cannot afford high quality child care.

- To enable those parents to care for their newborn at home for up to one year, Illinois should create a "First Year at Home" program that would provide a direct subsidy (in lieu of child care assistance) to families who qualify for the state's subsidized child care program. (See *START EARLY* on page 5)

Cornel West and Sylvia Ann Hewlett, authors of *The War Against Parents*, will deliver the conference keynote address on Thursday, February 18 at 5 p.m. The free presentation will be held at Northwestern University Law School.

Who Are the Children of Illinois? Building the Children's Charter

In February, Voices for Illinois Children, the Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern University Law School and dozens of statewide and community groups will gather organizations and individuals from around the state for a three-day working conference entitled *Who Are the Children of Illinois? – Building a Charter for the Future.*

Over 300 people are expected at the conference, which will take place February 18-20 at the Northwestern University Law School in Chicago. Participants in *Who Are the Children of Illinois* will work in teams exploring the unique place of children in our society, and examining their needs, talents and expectations in six fundamental areas: health; education; safety; families; economic security; and art, recreation and culture.

The conference builds on a similar meeting held in Kankakee in 1898, in which leaders of Illinois government, clergy and charitable organizations came together to ask "Who Are the Children of the State?"

One hundred years later, *Who Are the Children of Illinois* will draw on the backgrounds and expertise of many different groups concerned with children, including parents, educators, doctors, nurses, service providers, artists, clergy, policy makers and business and community leaders.

(See on page 5)

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Child Care Accreditation

An Important Step Toward High Quality

A Column from Voices' President Jerome Stermer

The more we learn about early brain development, the more we realize that high quality child care is essential to the learning that begins at birth. For many children, the quality of their child care is a major factor in setting them on a course toward future success in school and life.

However, once we start talking about quality child care, two important questions emerge. First, how do we measure quality? Second, how can we improve the quality of child care that is available in Illinois?

One key to both those questions is accreditation – an important new strategy that is helping to improve the quality of child care centers and homes around the country.

In a voluntary accreditation system, child care programs could pursue accreditation from one of several independent national organizations, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association for Family Child Care. Those organizations review the programs, measure them against established national standards, and often show them how to make the improvements needed to earn accreditation.

Accreditation enables child care centers and homes to compare themselves with the highest standards of quality, and gives them incentive to raise their programs to that high level.

At the same time, accreditation provides families with a new way to measure the quality of a child care center or home before their children are enrolled. Families will learn to seek the "seal of approval" of accrediting organizations, and this will only increase the incentive for programs to earn accreditation. Illinois' current system of child care licensing doesn't provide this important yardstick, because a license indicates that a center or home has met a certain standard of safety, not a standard of quality.

"It is clear that accreditation can help improve the quality of child care.

It is just as clear that help is needed."

It is clear that accreditation can help improve the quality of child care. It is just as clear that help is needed. Recent national studies found less than 10% of child care – whether in centers or homes – reaches a quality level that can be called educational.

There are several steps Illinois can take to promote voluntary child care accreditation.

One would be establishing a public-private partnership to help child care centers and homes earn accreditation. This partnership would provide grants to fund improvement plans, while also paying for consultants who could show programs how to gain and maintain accreditation.

One model for such a partnership is the new Chicago Accreditation Project, in which the city and the McCormick Tribune Foundation have pledged $5 million each over the next five years. With support from other foundations, the partnership expects to raise $16 million and help hundreds of child care centers and homes earn accreditation.

Another step Illinois should take is creating an enhanced child care subsidy rate for families that choose accredited programs. This enhanced rate would reward child care centers and homes for raising their standards, while also helping them maintain this new high level of care. For example, child care programs could use the increased income to help maintain a well-trained and well-compensated staff, which is one of the most important ingredients of quality care

These two strategies would establish accreditation in Illinois, and give parents and communities a valuable yardstick by which to measure the quality of child care. At the same time, voluntary accreditation would raise the bar for all child care centers and homes, and go a long way toward improving the quality of care available.

Voluntary accreditation has been tested in more than a dozen states. The time is right for Illinois to build on the experiences of those states, and take this important step toward quality. ◆

Jerry Stermer

Start Early Gets National Audience

More than a thousand of the nation's leading clinicians, scientists and administrators who work with babies and toddlers witnessed the presentation of Voices' *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* campaign during ZERO TO THREE's National Training Institute in Washington, D.C.

"We couldn't have a better opportunity to present this campaign to a national audience focused on the crucial issues facing babies and toddlers," said Joan Vitale, Voices' *Start Early* project director. "This was the ideal occasion to show others that we understand the importance of their brain research, and we are using it as the foundation for materials that can be implemented into existing parenting programs."

Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth is a multi-year, public education campaign focused on promoting new brain research and supporting new parents as they nurture the development of their child. The primary communications materials are an upbeat, contemporary video and an accompanying parenting magazine that Voices designed to help young, at-risk parents connect with key messages about how learning begins at birth.

The campaign relays several messages to parents. One of the most important messages encourages parents to communicate with their babies — by talking, singing, touching and playing — because it helps nurture brain development. Young parents also learn that it is o.k. to ask for help when they are in stressful or uncomfortable situations. In addition, the campaign reinforces the idea that parents should take time out for themselves.

"Our presentation at the National Training Institute also clarified some of the misconceptions that this campaign was only about videos and magazines," said Vitale. "One participant said he had heard about portions of the campaign but had no idea how comprehensive the program was. It was great to talk with them about the many different components of this campaign, and our different strategies for connecting with young parents."

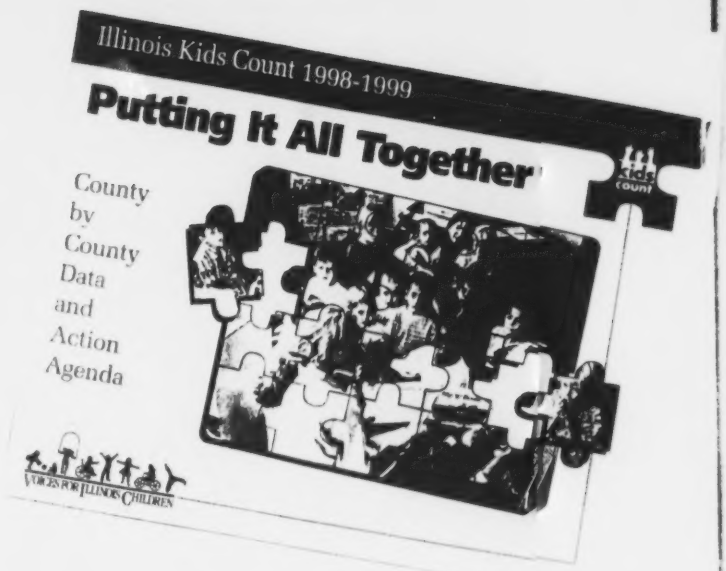
As a result of the presentation in D.C., ZERO TO THREE will highlight the *Start Early* materials in their national publications. This will help Voices distribute materials and build awareness of the *Start Early* campaign nationally.

Locally, the campaign continues to develop new opportunities as well. More than 500 people have received *Start Early* training and are now helping to communicate the *Learning Begins at Birth* message to at-risk parents. In addition, the campaign was recently presented to about 75 judges, state's attorneys, parent educators and child welfare workers at the Cook County Juvenile Court. The *Start Early* campaign has also built a strong presence in the Cradle to Classroom program, which is now in 40 high schools and eight hospitals in Chicago.

Plans for the next stages of *Start Early* are underway. Voices recently received funding from the Community Memorial Foundation in Hinsdale to bring the *Start Early* messages to DuPage County. In addition, we are optimistic about securing support expanding the project into six communities throughout the state over the next two years.

—By Marjorie Newman

THE *START EARLY: LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH* CAMPAIGN IS FUNDED WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE MCCORMICK TRIBUNE FOUNDATION, HARRIS FOUNDATION, STONE FAMILY FOUNDATION AND COMMUNITY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN, CONTACT JOAN VITALE AT (312) 516-5555.


Illinois Kids Count 1998-1999
Putting It All Together
County by County Data and Action Agenda
Voices for Illinois Children

Illinois Kids Count Putting It All Together

Welfare reform will have a significant impact on thousands of Illinois families, but the exact nature of that impact is still unclear. To mark the first year of welfare reform in Illinois, Voices for Illinois Children has released a new report examining how the program is working, and looking at the early signs of its effects on children and families.

The 1998 - 1999 *Illinois Kids Count* report shows that welfare caseloads decreased from 241,269 in October 1994 to 143,259 in October 1998, but also examines how that decline does not give a complete picture of the impact of welfare reform. For example, while 23.6% of Illinois' Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) case closings were due to increases in family income — through earnings or other means — many of these families are still economically unstable and in danger of returning to welfare. In addition, 680,000 Illinois children (about one in five) still live in poverty.

"We need to recognize a primary goal of welfare reform is to increase economic security for families," said Voices' President Jerry Stermer. "Achieving economic security is not just about getting a job, it's about putting all the pieces of an complex puzzle together. One goal of the new *Illinois Kids Count* is to highlight some of those pieces."

For example, education and training are key components to a successful transition off welfare, because they provide and strengthen skills many individuals need to secure and maintain employment. One of the largest barriers to employment is a lack of education and training. One of the "warning signs" highlighted in the *Illinois Kids Count* is that despite the importance of education and training, as of March 1998, only 40.6% of TANF recipients in Illinois had a high school diploma or GED.

Another issue discussed in the report is the challenge of child care. Many low-income parents moving off welfare work during evening hours, which can create problems because only 4.1% of child care centers (and 24% of child care homes) in Illinois offer evening care. (See PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER on page 10)

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Illinois Voters Concerned About Education

Photo: Jean Clough

Several recent surveys — including an informal study conducted by Voices — show that Illinois voters view education as the most important issue for the state's children.

Voices surveyed nearly 200 participants in the *Start Early* Community Forums held throughout the state. Over 47% of the participants selected education as the top issue of concern over other choices such as child abuse and neglect, drugs, health care and moral values.

"Throughout this survey, education and related issues — including public schools, child care and after-school programs — continue to come out on top," said Jerry Stermer, president of Voices. "Illinois residents are concerned with the quality of education for their children, and that will impact the way they vote."

In the survey, which was conducted at various *Start Early* Community Forums last fall, participants also demonstrated their recognition for the benefits of quality education.

When asked what program or service has helped children most in their community, early education was the first choice with 38.1 % **(public schools were the second choice with 28.1%).**

When asked to choose the area where Illinois has done the most to solve problems for children, education was the first choice with 29%.

Education was also the top issue in the 1998 Annual Survey of Illinois Voters, conducted by the Coalition for Consumer Rights. Respondents ranked seventeen issues on a scale from one to ten, ten representing what they worry about most. Education in our public schools ranked first at 6.44. The issue that ranked second was financial security at retirement, at 6.10.

—*By Marjorie Newman*

Education Reform in Illinois Illinois Learning Standards

This spring, Illinois students will begin taking the new Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) – the next step in a reform process developed around the Illinois Learning Standards.

The Illinois Learning Standards were adopted last year by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), working in collaboration with educators, parents, employers, working professionals and citizens from around the state.

The standards outline desired results in seven learning areas:

- **English/Language Arts (including reading, writing, speaking, listening and the study of literature)**
- **Mathematics (including arithmetic, measurement, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, statistics, probability and other fields)**
- **Science and Technology (including life sciences, physical sciences, and earth and space sciences, as well as issues of science, technology, and society)**
- **Social Science (including anthropology, economics, geography, history, law, political science, and sociology)**
- **Physical Development and Health**
- **Fine Arts (including dance, drama, music, and visual arts)**
- **Foreign Language**

The Illinois Learning Standards continue the reform process that began with the 34 State Goals for Learning adopted by Illinois in 1985. Building on those goals, the standards are designed to be more specific, and to communicate to students, teachers and parents exactly what students are expected to learn. At the same time, the standards remain broad enough to allow for a variety of local approaches to teaching, curriculum, course design and assessment.

According to the ISBE, the new tests are designed to focus on the specific goals and benchmarks established within the Illinois Learning Standards. "The Illinois Learning Standards describe what students should know and be able to do as a result of attending Illinois public schools, so this is the type of information that is on the ISAT," said Eunice Greer, ISBE's division administrator for standards.

The ISAT will begin this year with tests of reading, writing and mathematics in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10. Other subject areas will be phased in over the next few years, and eventually the ISAT will completely replace the current standardized test known as the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP).

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS, CHECK THE ISBE'S WEB SITE AT WWW.ISBE.STATE.IL.US.

Photo: Casey Silla

CONFERENCE
(continued from front page)

Together, these participants will explore the ways that children are different from adults, and the notion that "childhood" is something sacred to be nurtured and preserved.

"We have wanted to bring these groups together for many years," said Jerry Stermer, president of Voices for Illinois Children. "At a time when many children begin elementary school unprepared to learn, too few children are exposed to the art and culture that help them develop, and parents struggle to find quality child care, the need for this interdisciplinary conference is clear. Children grow up physically faster today, and technology exposes them to the adult world at a rapid pace. As a result, the very concept of childhood is in jeopardy."

To set the tone for the conference, Cornel West and Sylvia Ann Hewlett, authors of *The War Against Parents*, will deliver a keynote address on Thursday, February 18 at 5:00 pm. Another scheduled speaker is teenager LeAlan Jones, co-producer of a series of award-winning National Public Radio reports documenting life in Chicago's public housing developments and co-author of *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago*.

In addition, participants will spend most of the three days in small interdisciplinary teams, working to develop a comprehensive assessment of the responsibilities each segment of our society shares toward children. At the end of the conference, we will combine the efforts of each team to produce a *Children's Charter* that will unite parents, communities, professionals and policy makers toward the goal of helping all children thrive and succeed.

To lay the foundation for the conference and explore ideas that should be included in the *Children's Charter*, Voices hosted a series of preliminary community meetings around the state in January. Nearly 200 people attended those meetings – in Bloomington, Carterville, Chicago and Rockford – to talk about the many different challenges facing children in their communities, and the role we all share in helping them meet those challenges.

Who Are the Children of Illinois is part of a year-long Children's Court Centennial Commemoration, which marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Juvenile Court of Cook County – the first juvenile court in the world. The conference is underwritten with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, as well as from AT&T, CNA Insurance, EVEREN Securities, the Illinois Arts Council and Panasonic.

—By Alan Simpson

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT *WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF ILLINOIS* AND THE *CHILDREN'S CHARTER*, CONTACT KIM FITZGERALD OR ALAN SIMPSON AT VOICES.

START EARLY Legislative Agenda
(continued from front page)

Ensure the Well-Being of Poor, Young Children

Time spent with their parents is critical to ensuring that young children grow up healthy, well-adjusted and ready for school. The federal welfare reform legislation recognized this fact by giving states flexibility to adopt specific policies for parents of young children.

- Illinois should make the most of this flexibility by allowing parents with children under age six to satisfy the work requirement by working 20 hours per week.

Promote Child Care Accreditation

One of the most important ingredients for quality child care is consistent, well-trained and well-compensated child care teachers. Voluntary accreditation is the best way to improve quality and foster staff stability.

- Illinois should enhance child care subsidies for families choosing accredited programs, and establish a public-private partnership to help child care centers and homes earn accreditation.

In addition to these *Start Early* agenda items, we encourage Illinois policy makers to reform the early intervention system for children with developmental delays or disabilities, and to implement a thorough outreach campaign for the state's new KidCare child health insurance program.

TO CO-SPONSOR THE *START EARLY* LEGISLATIVE AGENDA OR RECEIVE REGULAR FAX UPDATES ON LEGISLATIVE ISSUES, CONTACT ALAN SIMPSON AT VOICES.

Voices' Policy Outreach Project

For many working families and those making the welfare-to-work transition, wages are not the only factor in making ends meet. Families need assistance generating additional income, identifying child care subsidies, and securing health care for their children. Yet all too often, working families do not utilize public programs and resources that can help them in the struggle to cover monthly expenses.

Voices for Illinois Children is working with community institutions in Chicago's North Lawndale, South Chicago and Albany Park neighborhoods to heighten understanding and use of three supports for working families: the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, child care subsidies, and the KidCare health insurance program. With the guidance and participation of our local partners, Voices is fusing information on these three supports into Spanish and English brochures for service providers and community residents. Circulation of the brochures begins this February. We plan to complement the dissemination of these brochures with neighborhood-specific training and ongoing assistance with outreach efforts in each community. Upon review of this pilot project, Voices' aspires to expand these services to additional communities.

Ultimately, Voices believes this comprehensive outreach initiative can significantly increase public awareness of these programs, and help add thousands of dollars to family incomes.

—By Brian Matakis

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Second Annual Start Early 5K Pledge Run & Walk

Photo: Steven Becker

ome join Voices for Illinois Children and hundreds of participants at 9 a.m. on Sunday, April 11, 1999 along Chicago's lakefront (Randolph and Lake Shore Drive) for the Second Annual *Start Early* 5K Pledge Run & Walk. This event will help raise funds to support our *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* campaign — an effort to educate the public and mobilize parents, communities and policy makers to support families and nurture the learning that begins at birth.

The Second Annual *Start Early* 5K Pledge Run & Walk is a CARA registered race, and participants can join as individuals or in running or walking teams.

Race sponsors include American Airlines, Caribou Coffee, Chicago Children's Museum, Chicago Parent, Clif Bar, Firstar Bank, Jewel-Osco, NAYA Water, Vertefs, WGN Television, WTMX Radio and the Young Lawyers Section of the Chicago Bar Association.

Registration is $17 before the day of the race, or $20 that morning. The Second Annual *Kids Dash* will follow the main race at approximately 10:15 a.m., and is free to children under age 10.

FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION OR TEAM CAPTAIN KITS, CONTACT DEMECE HARVEY AT (312) 516-5560.

The Licensing Coalition Moving Forward

The Licensing Coalition and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is making progress in strengthening Illinois' child care licensing system. The Licensing Coalition was developed as a collaborative effort between several nonprofit organizations concerned with child care licensing problems in the state.

Child care licensing—conducted by DCFS— has experienced several problems. Pressing issues include backlogs and delays as well as uneven monitoring and enforcement of Illinois child care licensing standards.

"As providers and advocates, we came together with a common goal: improve the licensing system," said Elissa Bassler of the Day Care Action Council. "We have all dealt with pieces of the licensing issue as individual organizations but knew we could accomplish more as a larger, working body."

The coalition focuses on what it calls *SMART* child care licensing, which stands for "high Standards, consistent Monitoring, Appropriate enforcement action, adequate Resources, and comprehensive information Tracking."

"We are very thrilled to support these elements of effective child care licensing," said Bassler. "Redesigning the basis from which we work is a vital step toward ensuring safety and quality services for our children."

In addition to working with the coalition, DCFS has made several internal changes, including:

- 75 additional child care licensing positions
- Higher staff qualifications
- On-going staff training
- Revised procedures manual
- Centralized information management
- Development of an information hotline

Photo: Courtesy of the Mayor's Office

Voices' President Jerry Stermer joins Chicago Mayor Richard Daley at an October press conference regarding a new Chicago child care initiative. Included in the photo are directors and coordinators of numerous advocacy and community-based programs that support improving child care services.

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National Support for Local Child Advocates

hild advocacy organizations nationwidde are receiving growing support toward acccomplishing their goals from the Natitional Association of Child Advocates (NACA). This assistance is more than a handful of mmoney. Most importantly, it is a working relationnship witli 59 member organizations in 44 sstates, and a way they can all communicate throrough one telephone call.

"Increasingly, most of the decisions affeecting kids are made at the state level, so it is imporrtant that children have strong advocattes in each state," said NACA President Tamara Copeland. "NACA is developing new ways for state and local organizations to commmunicate, so they can learn from each other's experiences and build on strategies that havee succeeded elsewhere."

Copeland joined NACA as presidceent in June, 1997. She brought with her a wwealth of knowledge about promoting the qquality of services for children and families. Prior to joining NACA, Copeland was directtor of the National Health & Education Coomsortium, a Legislative Director for Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), and the Director of the Southern Regional Project on Infant Mortality.

All NACA members are citizen-based, non-profit, independent organizations receiving little or no public funding. They are multi-issue organizations that recognize children need an array of experiences and services to grow-up strong and productive. They are also advocates that educate decision makers on children's issues.

"This is a bottom-up organization, an information-sharing system,"," said Copeland. "NACA members need to bbe able to share ideas and work together, and c one of our most important jobs is moving infaformation from one state to another — and frrom all the states to the national organizatiion. This way, we can help ensure that a victory fofor kids in Illinois can become a victory for kkids in California or New Jersey."

One way NACA keeps members connnected is through the Great Idea Series. NNACA profiles successful efforts of different t member organizations, so other memberrs can adapt ideas when planning their own s strategies and events. Voices' annual fundrraising dinner was one of the events recentlly profiled in this series.

Photo: Courtesy of NACA

Tamara Lucas Copeland, president of the National Association of Child Advocates.

INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN ADDVOCACY WORK CAN CHECK NACA'S WEB SITE AT WWW.CHILDADVOCACY.ORG.

Reviewing Our First Year of Welfare Reform

More than 400 policy makers, service providers and researchers attended *Illinois Welfare Reform: Where are we now? Where are we going?* - the second annual statewide welfare reform symposium held at the University of Chicago's Gleacher Center. Participants at the day-long event discussed the impact of welfare reform and assessed policy strategies for enhancing the economic self-sufficiency and well-being of low-income families in Illinois.

For example, while welfare caseloads have dropped by nearly 41%, symposium participants noted that this decline occurred under very favorable economic conditions, and Illinois should prepare for problems that may occur when circumstances change.

"During the next economic downturn, welfare caseloads will increase once again, but federal block grant funding will not," said Lawrence B. Joseph of the Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago.

Throughout the symposium, advocates and experts explored how early indications of welfare reform are positive, but Illinois still needs to determine how to best help low-income working families balance work and family, as well as how to help the families that have not been able to sustain full-time work.

Illinois Welfare Reform: Where are we now? Where are we going? was co-sponsored by the City of Chicago-Cook County Welfare Reform Task Force, Northwestern University/ University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research, the Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago, and Voices for Illinois Children.

Earned Income Tax Credit

Single or married people who worked full time or part time at some point in 1998 can qualify for the federal EITC, depending on their income. Families raising one child at home with a family income below $25,473 in 1998 can get an EITC of up to $2,271. Families with more than one child at home and a family income below $30,095 in 1998 can get an EITC of up to $3,756. Also, tax payers between age 25 and 64 with no children at home and an income below $10,030 can get an EITC of up to $341.

Different forms are required for single and married taxpayers with or without children. Other situations may require the worker to attach the Schedule EIC to Form 1040.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CORRECT FORMS NEEDED FOR YOUR SPECIFIC SITUATION, CALL THE IRS DURING BUSINESS HOURS AT 1-800-TAX-1040.

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A child advocate, friend and founding Board Member: GEORGE KELM

He was devoted to children and families in Illinois and concerned with the growth of the legal profession. Seventy-year-old George Kelm — a founding board member for Voices for Illinois Children, a lawyer and a leader of many civic groups and causes — died Thursday, December 17, 1998.

"I first met George Kelm over forty years ago when we were opposing attorneys arguing a dry jurisdictional matter in federal court," said Richard Mandel, Voices' founding board member and partner of Mandel, Lipton & Stevenson, Ltd. "Because of our mutual interest in juvenile justice and child welfare, our paths often crossed after that, and we became good friends. When a group of us were germinating the idea of a non-government supported and non-service providing advocacy organization, it was logical to bring George in at the outset. That was probably the best idea we had. By then George was president of the Woods Fund, and he became our spark plug and our entry into the foundation world."

Kelm chaired the task force behind the creation of Voices. The goal was to get children's issues at the top of the state's public policy agenda. Many of the issues that were a priority at the time remain top priorities today, including education funding, improved health care for uninsured children and policies and procedures to help people move from welfare to work.

"George Kelm convinced me to come on the Voices board," said Sokoni Karanja, founding board member and executive director at the Centers for New Horizons. "He said, 'Sokoni, this is as important as any board you have sat on or will sit on. It will provide the type of statewide and national policy impact that is sorely lacking in Illinois.' I would say, based on Voices' current stature, George was right."

Kelm was a very active advocate and civic leader who preferred to remain behind the scenes. In addition to helping found Voices, he was president and board member of the Woods Fund of Chicago; president of the Chicago Bar Foundation and the Northwestern Law Alumni Association; and president and chief executive officer of Sahara Enterprises, Inc.

Kelm's generous heart also led him to serve as trustee, director, chair or member of countless groups, organizations and associations statewide. His generosity continues today. At his family's request, many people have sent donations to Voices in his memory.

Survivors include his wife, Miriam Jean; two sons, Bruce and Robert; a stepson, Dick Ingram; a stepdaughter, Andrea Ingram; and six grandchildren.

What's Happening at Home: Voices for Illinois Children

Voices is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization working to secure the future well-being of the people of the state. We work with families, communities and policy makers to ensure that all children grow up healthy, nurtured, safe and well educated.

We're moving! Voices is moving to a new location in our building. As of March, 1999, our address will be:

208 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1490
Chicago, Illinois 60604

We anticipate that our main telephone, direct lines and fax numbers will not change.

Voices' **1999 Annual Meeting** will be held March 16, 1999 at the University Club of Chicago, 76 East Monroe Street at 11 a.m. Our guest speaker will be Alex Kotlowitz, author of *There Are No Children Here* and *The Other Side of the River*. Registration for the meeting and lunch is $35. For more information call Jim Perry at (312) 456-0600, ext. 552.

The ***Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth*** campaign is opening doors for other community based organizations. *Real Fathers Real Men* — a non-profit organization that works to strengthen communication between fathers and their children — recently received a $10,000 donation from the McCormick Tribune Foundation on behalf of Malik Yusef. Yusef was the Wordsmyth who delivered a creative message on parenting in the *Start Early* video.

Voices was awarded the **1998 Friend of Children** award from Prevent Child Abuse-Illinois. Included in the photo (from left to right) are Roy Harley, executive director, Prevent Child Abuse-Illinois; Jerry Stermer; and **Jim** Wexsteen, board president, Prevent Child Abuse-Illinois.

Voices' President, **Jerry Stermer** served on the Children and Families Committee for Governor George Ryan's Transition Team.

Leslie Parello recently joined Voices as the Office Manager. She is responsible for data, office and volunteer management. Parello's work experience with Columbia College and Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children is sure to benefit Voices.

Former Voices' Project Director, **Ami Nagle**, is now consulting for Arizona Children First — a coalition of parents, educators and community leaders interested in improving the educational outcomes for Arizona students. She is researching the state's educational system and current efforts to reduce class size. Nagle's research will result in a compilation and comparison of state efforts and will include additional recommendations for educational reform.

Voices' Director of Development, **Jim Perry**, was recently included in Who's Who in the Midwest 26th Edition for demonstrating outstanding achievement in resource development and community service.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG FOR THE LATEST ON UPCOMING EVENTS AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON LEGISLATION AND POLICY ISSUES.

IF YOU KNOW A PERSON OR A GROUP THAT YOU THINK SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED FOR GREAT ADVOCACY EFFORTS, CALL **MARJORIE NEWMAN** AT (312) 456-0600, EXT. 564.

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11

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
(continued from page 3)

The *Illinois Kids Count* also examines other key pieces families need to put together in order to make the transition from welfare to work and to achieve economic security, including:

Housing

Transportation

Health

Child Support

Family Time

Taxes

"One year after welfare reform began, we're seeing a lot of families make the transition from welfare to work, and that's very good news," said Stermer. "While we place emphasis on helping these individuals keep their jobs, we also need to help those who are least job ready and make sure they get the support they need to provide for their families."

With that goal in mind, the *Illinois Kids Count* outlines an action agenda urging individuals, communities and policy makers to:

promote economic security

expand quality early learning

provide quality health care

strengthen vulnerable families

THE ***1998 - 1999 ILLINOIS KIDS COUNT: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER*** COST $15 FOR NON-MEMBERS AND $12 FOR MEMBERS. A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEB SITE AT WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG. FOR A FULL COPY OF THE REPORT, CONTACT VOICES AT (312) 456-0600.

Advocacy Resources: Know Your Facts

Voices produces materials that can help us all become better advocates for children. Here are a few examples of the available resources.

This years' data book examines the first year of welfare reform and highlights the complex and difficult issues families face in moving off welfare and out of poverty. This report also provides child well-being statistics for each of Illinois' 102 counties and outlines an agenda to improve the lives of children.

$12 for members; $15 for non-members

This Special Report describes how a refundable state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) can serve as a targeted and cost-effective tool to bolster existing income security policies by reducing low-income families' tax burden and rewarding work.

Complimentary

This report details the state's new KidCare program, which provides health insurance to thousands of uninsured children. The report includes information on services provided and cost per family based on size and income.

Complimentary

This book measures the educational, social, economic and physical well-being of children in the United States on a national and state-by-state level.

Check the Annie E. Casey Foundation web site at www.aecf.org for a complimentary copy.

This award-winning technical assistance guide offers step-by-step instructions to locate data on children and families as well as equations to calculate basic statistics. This informative guide also includes a detailed list of national and Illinois-specific education, economic, child welfare and health data sources.

Complimentary

An 11-minute video summary of the one-hour show explaining the needs of infants and young children. This fascinating video, produced by WTTW/Channel 11 and supported by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, shows 10 easy things parents can do to dramatically aid in the development of their baby.

For a copy of the video, call the McCormick Tribune Foundation at 1-888-683-2224

MANY OF THESE AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEB SITE. VISIT US AT WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG.

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VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
VOICES

Inside Voices

Kids Count Awards
New Board Members
Help for Working Families

Volume 11, Number 2 SUMMER 1999

Progress Toward the *Children's Charter*

In February, hundreds of individuals and organizations from around the state came together to explore the special nature of childhood and examine the needs, talents and expectations of Illinois children. The three-day conference, ***Who Are the Children of Illinois***, took the first crucial steps toward developing a *Children's Charter* – a comprehensive assessment of our vision for children and the responsibilities we share in helping them thrive and succeed.

"We had hundreds of people from dozens of professions working to agree on a written outline of how we can help Illinois children have the best opportunities in life," said Voices' President Jerry Stermer.

Voices was one of several dozen state and local organizations behind the planning of the conference at Northwestern University School of Law. After three days of dialogue and negotiation, an editorial team clarified the *Children's Charter* draft and prepared it for public review. Until late June, Voices for Illinois Children and other co-sponsoring organizations will be distributing the *Charter* and gathering feedback from individuals and organizations around the state.

The vision and primary goals of the draft *Children's Charter* are highlighted below:

All children are created equal, and are vital to the preservation of a vigorous democracy. For children to prosper, we must meet all their basic needs. We must nurture each child through the full and active participation of families, communities, business, spiritual organizations and government. When children realize their potential and fulfill their dreams, our communities flourish and we are enriched beyond measure.

(See on page 5)

Start Early Parent Materials Move Statewide

With key support from two foundations, Voices for Illinois Children is preparing to bring the *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* parent materials to communities around Illinois. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has awarded Voices a two-year grant that will enable us to bring the video and magazine to parents in six new communities around the state. In addition, the Community Memorial Foundation is providing support to help us get the *Start Early* materials and messages to young parents in DuPage County.

The first step in this statewide expansion is building and strengthening relationships with the local agencies and organizations that will play an essential role in connecting young, at-risk parents with the *Start Early* campaign.

"We designed *Start Early* with a focus on our partners in each community, because we wanted our messages to build on the services they provide and the relationships they've established," said *Start Early* Project Director Joan Vitale. "As we move to new communities, we need the same strong local partnerships that we've been able to nurture during the first stage in Chicago."

While Voices has received significant public recognition for the *Start Early* materials – including a Golden Trumpet Award from the Publicity Club of Chicago – Vitale noted that the materials would have far less impact without the dedication and effort of the *Start Early* partners. "We have had an overwhelming response from our partners," she said. "They have really connected with the *Start Early* messages, and they are finding so many new ways to reach out to young mothers with this crucial information about supporting their babies' early brain development."

There are now more than 100 *Start Early* partners in Chicago, ranging from hospitals and pediatric clinics to parent support groups and home-visiting programs. Over the past year and a half, these partnerships have helped more than 23,000 young parents connect with *Start Early* through people they know and trust. As importantly, the campaign materials have helped our partners link more parents to their programs and the valuable services they provide.

Sabrina Provine and Joann Allen of Bethany Hospital.

The three partners highlighted in this article illustrate the relationships that are so vital to the success of *Start Early*.

Bethany Hospital

Joann Allen and Sabrina Provine of Bethany Hospital say the *Start Early* project was "a natural fit" for their Healthy Steps program, which works with families during their children's first three years to foster healthy child development and encourage positive relationships between parents and the hospital.

In addition to providing the video and magazine, Healthy Steps staff members have been communicating the *Start Early* messages in their home visits and parenting classes, and they're seeing results. Their program participants are sharing the *Start Early* materials with other young mothers. They are learning to listen to their babies, and to ask for help when they need it.

Start Early is showing these young mothers that it feels good to help their babies grow and learn, and it is working because the Healthy Steps staff is dedicated to sharing the message. "It really does reach out to everyone," said Provine. "I feel comfortable giving it to everybody."

(See START EARLY on page 5)

The Core of Community
And the Foundation for a *Children's Charter*

A Column from Voices' President Jerome Stermer

While preparing for the *Who Are the Children of Illinois* conference in February, we held a series of preliminary meetings around the state to clarify people's ideas about the most important challenges facing children and families today.

At each of these meetings, the discussion inevitably turned to questions about community: How do we define community? What different communities are we each a part of, and how do those communities interact? Why are they important? What can each of us do to foster and strengthen a sense of community?

At one meeting, a teen leader provided a simple but essential clue to many of these questions. "It's right there in the word," he explained. "You can't have *community* if you don't have *unity*."

It's a concept I think about frequently, in the work that surrounds the *Children's Charter* and in our many efforts on behalf of children – in Springfield and in cities, towns and neighborhoods around the state.

In the end, it all comes down to unity. Whether in a campaign to advocate for children statewide, or a local collaborative effort to help kids in a neighborhood, there is great strength in numbers. In twelve years of child advocacy, the lesson we've learned again and again is that we can accomplish much more if people can get together behind a common goal.

That's why more than two dozen state and local organizations came together as co-sponsors of the *Start Early* Advocacy Agenda, and encouraged policy makers in Springfield to adopt the agenda and ensure that more Illinois children grow up healthy, nurtured, safe and well educated.

That's why more than 30 different groups joined together to organize and host the *Who Are the Children of Illinois* conference. It's also why hundreds of people from around the state participated in the dialogue that has become the foundation for the *Children's Charter*.

Because together, we know we can make a difference.

Together, we can inspire policy makers to adopt strategies like the KidCare child health insurance program, and to make sure it reaches uninsured children in all parts of the state.

Together, we can help business, civic and community leaders recognize the importance of investing in our children from birth, through quality child care and early childhood learning programs.

Together, we can develop a strong and powerful *Children's Charter* that reflects our shared responsibilities toward the children of Illinois.

Together, we can use the *Charter* to rally many more people around the goal of helping all children thrive and succeed.

The people who gathered for the *Who Are the Children of Illinois* conference and the preliminary meetings represent dozens of organizations, hundreds of communities and neighborhoods, and many different backgrounds. Parents, children, teachers, community leaders, service providers, advocates, business leaders and policy makers have all been involved.

We've come a long way in bringing the *Children's Charter* to this stage. But we're not done yet. It's time for even more people to get involved. Whether you participated in the conference or not, we need you to take a look at the excerpt of the draft *Children's Charter* that begins on the front page. (You can also find it on our Web site.) And we need you to send it to others.

With your help, we'll forge a truly meaningful *Children's Charter*. And we'll take big steps toward putting a strong sense of *unity* in the *community* of Illinois.

Jerry Stermer

"Because together, we know we can make a difference."

Forecast 2020
Children as the key to Our Economic Future

Chicago Metropolis 2020 – a new collaboration of civic, business, religious and community organizations – has determined that improving education and child care is a key step in preserving the economic vitality of the Chicago area.

Chicago Metropolis 2020 was developed over the last two years by members of the Commercial Club of Chicago. In March, the group released it's new report "Chicago Metropolis 2020: Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21st Century."

The report makes children a high priority, stating that "nothing affecting the region's economic vitality in the next century will be as important as the quality of health care, nurture and education provided to the region's children." While the report notes several recent improvements in the areas of education and child care, it also points toward crucial challenges that remain.

For example, Chicago Metropolis 2020 recommends several state and local initiatives to improve pay for teachers and principals, create performance-based bonuses for teachers, and implement alternate teacher certification programs to recruit new teachers from business and other professions.

As importantly, the group recognizes that quality learning begins in the earliest years, so it is focused on challenges in the child care arena. Specifically, while the number of child care slots has increased due to recent state support, Chicago Metropolis 2020 is concerned with other factors that affect the quality of child care, such as low wages and poor benefits for child care employees, limited professional training and high turnover.

In order to prepare children for school, the report advocates that both business and government make a greater commitment to quality child care. Specifically, Chicago Metropolis 2020 recommends that business take a greater role in planning and paying for child care, and that the state expand the child care subsidy program and invest more in child care facilities.

"The report from Chicago Metropolis 2020 clearly demonstrates that business and civic leaders recognize the importance of investing in our children," said Voices' President Jerry Stermer. "With more public-private collaborations like this one encouraging real financial support for the needs of children, we can help ensure that the Chicago region continues to thrive economically."

Chicago Metropolis 2020 is a collaboration of organizations from around the region, and the group's executive council includes business and government leaders such as Governor George Ryan, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and Andrew J. McKenna, chairman of Schwarz Paper Company. Major donors include the Chicago Community Trust, the Commercial Club of Chicago, the Grand Victoria Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation and Inland Steel Industries/Ryerson Tull, Inc.

George Ranney Jr. – a founding board member of Voices for Illinois Children – will serve as president and CEO of Chicago Metropolis 2020.

For more information about Chicago Metropolis 2020, call (312) 332-2020.

Start Early 5K Run a Big Success

Representatives from the Penny Lane day-care facility in Oak Lawn, which brought a team of 50 parents, teachers and children to participate in Voices' second annual *Start Early* 5K Run & Walk. Penny Lane was the largest team and raised the most money for the event, held on Chicago's lakefront on April 11.

Voices thanks the hundreds of participants and volunteers who came out for the 5K, which is designed to support the *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* campaign. Your support made it a big success!

Help is Here for Working Families

Since early this year, Voices has been collaborating with more than 30 community groups in Chicago's North Lawndale, South Chicago and Albany Park neighborhoods to increase awareness of how families can stretch their resources.

This new outreach program is designed to help more low-income families learn about – and take advantage of – three key income support programs: The federal Earned Income Tax Credit, child care subsidies and the KidCare health insurance program. "While welfare caseloads are declining, there are still a lot of families struggling to achieve economic self-sufficiency," said Voices' State Finances Director Brian Matakis. "These three programs can be a big help in easing some of the financial burdens for families living on the margin."

The primary goal of the outreach program is to work within existing community networks to get information out about the tax credit, child care and health care options for low-income working families.

The three neighborhoods were chosen for this pilot program because they offer the requisite combination of needs and opportunities: Large numbers of low-income working families, a rich fabric of neighborhood institutions, service providers, and public leaders, and a demonstrated willingness to collaborate with external organizations interested in helping residents.

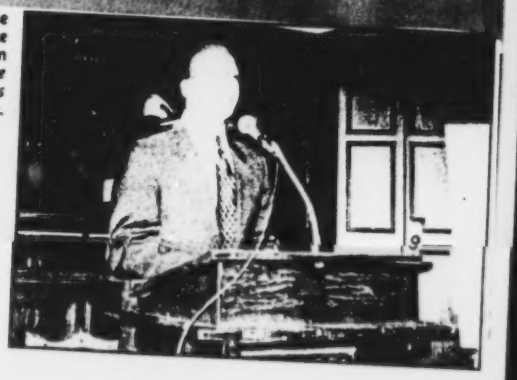
In March, Voices produced more than 20,000 informational brochures (in English and Spanish) outlining the ways low-income families can utilize these income support programs. The brochures – entitled "Help is Here for Working Families" – were distributed to local agencies and supported by service provider training and tools.

Each of the three target neighborhoods has several distribution locations, including Tax Counseling Project sites and places where families can get help completing KidCare applications. As a result, the neighborhoods have a web of outlets where families can get the information and the hands-on guidance they need.

"Offering information on these supports is a great opportunity for communities, particularly for working poor families, which make up a lot of our Mom-and-Pop storefront shops," said Dinah Ramirez, operations director of the Chicago Family Health Center in South Chicago.

Building on this preliminary network of local service agencies, Voices plans to connect with faith-based institutions, schools, and businesses in each neighborhood to find new ways to reach residents. In South Chicago, Voices has hired Dr. Maria Rudisch – a veteran activist who has been involved with community, religious and economic development groups in the neighborhood for decades – to serve as a part-time outreach consultant. Dr. Rudisch is furnishing ongoing technical assistance to partner organizations and expanding the number of neighborhood groups involved. Voices is also hiring outreach consultants in North Lawndale and Albany Park.

Voices new outreach project is supported by funding from the Polk Bros. Foundation and the Field Foundation. ♦



Secretary of State Jesse White addressing the final plenary session of the *Who Are the Children of Illinois* conference.

Hugh Parry of the United Way of Illinois welcoming participants on the opening day of the conference.

One of ten discussion groups working on components of the *Children's Charter*.

CHILDREN'S CHARTER
(continued from front page)

The closing plenary session of the conference, where the working draft of the *Children's Charter* was developed.

We believe in these values and principles and commit to work together to secure the goals of this charter for all the children of Illinois:

- Childhood is a sacred time that should be nurtured, celebrated and preserved.
- Children's basic needs are family, safety, education, health, economic security, and arts, recreation and culture.
- All children need to know they belong to loving families and caring communities.
- Just as families must support children, communities must support families, and government and business must support both.
- All children deserve safe homes, safe schools and safe communities.
- Our children's sense of hope and possibility requires equal access to equal resources.
- Children are prepared for the future when we teach them to honor and embrace diversity.
- As children mature, we must seek their voices, engage them, and recognize the freedom they need to shape their destinies.
- Each child is unique.
- Every child is entitled to respect.
- We must never give up on any child.

The complete draft of the *Children's Charter* is on Voices' Web site, where you can also find sections outlining the vision and goals for children in six specific areas: family, safety, education, health, economic security, and arts, recreation and culture.

"We encourage everyone who is interested in helping children succeed to review the *Charter* and send it to others," said Stermer. "Only with input from around the state will we be able to create a document that truly reflects our consensus about the needs and interests of all children."

The ***Who Are the Children of Illinois*** conference was underwritten with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, as well as from AT&T, CNA Insurance, Everen Securities, the Illinois Arts Council and Panasonic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE *CHILDREN'S CHARTER*, CHECK THE VOICES WEB SITE (WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG) OR CONTACT KIM FITZGERALD AT (312) 456-0600.

START EARLY
(continued from front page)

Both women say another important part of the success of *Start Early* has been their bond with the young mothers, which enabled them to introduce the early brain development messages within a relationship of trust.

Allen and Provine are now planning to move the *Start Early* campaign to the obstetrics department, where new mothers will have a chance to view the materials before leaving the hospital. Each mom will be able to take a copy of the video and magazine home, so they can share the information with friends and family.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Food Centers

The WIC centers, which supply food and support to low-income women and children, have distributed *Start Early* materials to thousands of young mothers since the campaign began. Sylvia Lopez, coordinator of community affairs at WIC, said the campaign has made her very enthusiastic. "I feel that for the first time – and I'm forty-six – people are working for just children, not children who are sick or children with disabilities, just children in general," she said.

"I wanted to get one tape to each mother," said Lopez, "to open their knowledge – to achieve more awareness of parenting, different ways of dealing with the child, and how other people can participate in your child rearing."

WIC staff have seen a variety of improvements in the parenting style of moms who have received *Start Early* materials. The moms aren't as worried about 'spoiling' their babies, more moms are reading to their children, and "involvement with the father is more open to discussion," said Lopez. As importantly, the parents are talking to each other about the *Start Early* messages and sharing them with their families.

The WIC centers are an especially important part of the network because they connect with a large population of young parents that are not linked to any other programs. Each woman entering a WIC center is asked if she is pregnant or has a child under the age of three. If so, she is offered the *Start Early* materials, and encouraged to talk with a staff member about the early brain development messages. Lopez laughed as she recalled several young women who tried to return the *Start Early* materials, refusing to believe that the video was theirs to keep.

The partnership has gotten off to a strong start, and Lopez foresees a great future. "The goal of WIC is to enrich the lives of children, and that's what Voices is doing," said Lopez. "I just hope to keep working with Joan Vitale and getting the message out to as many people as I can."

Catholic Charities Roseland/Altgeld Adolescent Parent Program

Graduation at Catholic Charities RAAPP.

The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago have a teen-parenting program that provides parent support groups and home visiting. LuDella Gilmore, the program supervisor, said the goals of Voices and Catholic Charities are similar, and *Start Early* is "just like a glove – it fits perfectly."

The Catholic Charities RAAPP program focuses mainly on parent-child interaction activities. "We try to get them to be effective parents and understand child development and stay in school," said Gilmore. "We don't want them to wait until the child is three or four years old; they can learn right now."

Caseworkers use the *Start Early* materials in all of their programming, and break the video down to ensure that the moms really grasp the messages, asking questions like "Tell me how you're going do this with your baby."

To explain the success of *Start Early* with her teen parents, Gilmore cited one example. A nineteen-year-old mom was constantly yelling at her two children. The first time she saw the video, she said "I want to be loving with my children, but they're so bad!" Gilmore encouraged her to take it home and watch it again so they could discuss it in future sessions. "She doesn't curse at her children anymore," said Gilmore. "She's got this big smile on her face, and now she's volunteering her time at the child-parent center and wants to become a group leader."

This is just one way the moms at Catholic Charities RAAPP are learning from the *Start Early* materials. "They really didn't think about brain development," said Gilmore. "If the baby had ten fingers and ten toes, that was enough. Now they realize how their babies are really learning from day one."

The *Start Early, Learning Begins at Birth* campaign is supported by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, with additional funding from the J. Harris Foundation.

— by Kristen Masse

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Voices' Kids Count Dinner Recognizes Commitments to Children

On June 2, Voices honored several individuals, organizations and corporations for their efforts to provide a better future for Illinois children. The awards were presented at the 9th annual Kids Count Dinner in Chicago.

In addition to the Kids Count Awards, the dinner featured remarks by Senator Richard Durbin.

Kids Count Award winner Shirley W. Ryan (left) with former Governor Jim Edgar and Voices' Board Chair Lorraine Barba.

Shirley W. Ryan was honored for her distinguished efforts on behalf of children all over the world. In 1985, her belief that the brain could create new connections when the old connections no longer work led her to co-found and become president of an outpatient neurodevelopmental therapy center called Pathways Center for Children. Ryan also co-founded Pathways Awareness Foundation – a public health organization dedicated to physically challenged children. She was appointed to the National Council on Disability by two U.S. presidents, served on the executive committee of the Chicago Community Trust from 1988-1998, and serves in various leadership positions for the Chicago Foundation on Education, Ronald McDonald's Children's Charities, the Inner City Teaching Corps, and the 21st Century Urban Schools. Ryan's award was delivered in a special presentation by former Governor Jim Edgar.

The organizational award was presented to the GFWC Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs. GFWC is one of the world's largest and oldest women's volunteer organizations shaping local agendas to meet the needs of a variety of communities. Through their special project, *Our Promise… A Safe Place for Every Child*, the GFWC Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs has raised public awareness and generated significant support for Healthy Families – the network of voluntary home visiting programs. GFWC is also a key supporter of the *Never Shake a Baby* campaign and Voices' *Start Early* Advocacy Agenda.

GFWC Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs members (left to right) Jackie Haddad, Norma Chesney, Debbie Bach, Pat Heitman and Martha Bein with Voices' President Jerry Stermer.

Panasonic Corporation was honored for their dedication to children and for their collaborative educational projects around the state. For example, Panasonic is working with Elgin Community College on a project called *Youth Leadership Academy*, in which students get hands-on experience planning and producing an actual TV broadcast. In another project, students at the Dorothy deLacey Family Education Center in Carpentersville work with Panasonic employees, who encourage them to improve their writing skills through a "Pen Pals" program.

Voices also presented the Helen R. Weigle Award for Innovations in Children's Programming to the McClernand Elementary School Community Partnership in Springfield. McClernand's collaborations with businesses and community groups have helped create a variety of education, mentoring and family support programs, which are highlighted on the following page.

The 1999 Kids Count Awards Dinner was co-chaired by Edgar D. Jannotta Sr. of William Blair & Company and Robert L. Wolters of AT&T.

Community Collaboration

McClernand Elementary School

By collaborating with local businesses and community groups, McClernand Elementary School in Springfield has found new ways to provide a wider range of services and meet the needs of its students.

"Collaboration is the key to the success of any program," said McClernand Principal Christine Stahly. "We found that pulling from several resources provides a more complete package *for* our students."

In order to help the collaborations succeed, a teacher is employed by the district to serve as a liaison between the school and its partners. This teacher communicates with the principal and partners on a daily basis and serves on a steering committee that guides all school improvement efforts.

"Currently, we are involved in eight collaborative efforts ranging from tutoring and mentoring to art and recreation," said Stahly. "Each provides a unique curriculum that is tailored to the children we serve. We believe no child should be left out."

McClernand Elementary School Principal, Christine Stahly.

Bank One is one example of the local businesses involved in mentoring programs at McClernand. Bank employees serve as mentors throughout the school year, and are available one day each week during lunch period, before school starts or at the end of the school day, so students do not miss class time for mentoring sessions.

McClernand also provides a community-based parent education program with the assistance of Kumler Neighborhood Ministries. Through a ten-week program at Kumler, parents learn to make good choices, prevent abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and reinforce their parenting skills.

"Our parent education program, *It Takes a Village to Raise a Child*, has truly helped parents connect with their children and other parents," said Stahly. "Increased communication has led to increased parent involvement and improved self-esteem among students."

The school also provides art programs encouraging students to develop their creative skills. The Springfield Art Association and Prairie Art Alliance are just two examples of organizations that provide arts instruction at McClernand. Through these collaborations, students and teachers have had lessons in African-American storytelling, quilt making, planting butterfly gardens, ceramics and making Ukrainian Easter eggs.

One key reason collaboration works at the school is McClernand's mission that "meeting the needs of our students in an atmosphere of mutual respect shall be the shared responsibility of students, parents, staff and community as we become lifelong learners."

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SAVE THE DATE

Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth Professional Development Conference

October 1, 1999
9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.

Standard Club,
320 S. Plymouth Ct.
Chicago

The conference, hosted by Voices for Illinois Children, the Erikson Institute and Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families will offer new information and tools for early childhood professionals.

"We really want to take this opportunity to not only provide information, but to celebrate the efforts of all professionals working to improve the well being of children," said *Start Early* Project Director Joan Vitale.

Alicia F. Lieberman, Ph.D., author of the award winning *The Emotional Life of the Toddler* will present the keynote address. Workshops will focus on topics such as integrated parenting, child care, parent support and neonatal assessment.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONFERENCE, CONTACT JOAN VITALE AT (312) 456-0555.

Individual Development Accounts A New Path to Economic Stability

An innovative financial strategy called an Individual Development Account (IDA) offers low-income families a new opportunity to save money and move off welfare.

IDAs are matched savings accounts specifically designed for low-income individuals, who are very often parents dependent on welfare. Account holders must make deposits from their earned income, and those deposits are then matched by state, local or non-profit organizations. The funds must be left in the IDA for a predetermined length of time (normally two years) and the earnings must be used for specific goals such as home purchases, vocational/higher education, or business capitalization for individuals who are self-employed.

"We were one of the first groups in the country to develop IDAs," said Jenice Jones-Kibby, policy director at the Women's Self-Employment Project (WSEP) in Chicago. "Our first two-year IDA program was so successful that now we have three programs operating simultaneously, as well as the new statewide IDA program."

WSEP's first IDA began in 1995, and the results were impressive. 84 percent of the participants are now off welfare. In addition, 54 percent used their money for home ownership, 40 percent for business capitalization, and 6 percent for post-secondary education.

Zelinda Davis-Kirk was a participant in that first IDA program. She was enrolled in a WSEP business training course when she learned about the savings program.

"When I took the business training course, I was on public aid," said Davis-Kirk. "I had saved a little money in the past, but emergencies kept coming up which required me to use the little that I saved. What attracted me to the IDA program was that I couldn't use the money until the end of the two-year program."

While investing in the IDA, Davis-Kirk opened a separate savings account for emergencies. Before the program ended, Davis-Kirk and a group of women decided they wanted to do more. They combined resources and ideas and started an investment club, which still exists today.

Davis-Kirk was able to save $1,500 in the IDA, in addition to money she made in the investment club and her separate savings account. But the IDA provided more than just a way to save money.

"It gave me and other women a chance to meet in a positive environment. We were able to discuss how to meet our financial needs for our businesses and our families. It improved my self-confidence and helped me dream big dreams," said Davis-Kirk.

"It's the educational component that's the key. It gives an interpersonal benefit that I can't put a dollar amount on. I can now go out and talk with anyone and feel confident," continued Davis-Kirk. "I used to say 'I can't and they won't let me', but now I say 'I can and they won't stop me'."

Eighteen months after the program ended, Davis-Kirk was off public aid. She used her IDA funds to purchase more equipment for her image consulting firm, Lady Z Fashion Plus, enabling her to take her business to larger clients. Her IDA experience also landed her a job facilitating a savings program for girls.

Building on the success of the first program, WSEP spearheaded efforts to pass legislation creating the new statewide IDA program, which has received one-time funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services for 100 accounts.

— by Marjorie Newman

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON IDAs, CONTACT JENICE JONES-KIBBY AT WSEP (312) 606-8255.

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Voices Says Thanks and Welcomes New Board Members

After years of benefitingg from their dedication to improving the lives of Illinois children, in March Voices honored six retiring mmembers of the Board of Directors: Chair Kathleen L. Halloran, past chair John Rhine, past chair and fdounding board member Richard Mandel, and founding board members Sokoni Karanja, Ph.D., Mickie S Silverstein, and Bernice Weissbourd.

At the same meeting,z, Voices elected Lorraine Barba as the new board chair, and welcomed five new board members: Larry RR. Jones, M.D., Anthony McCain, Lynn Montei, Jean Osborn, and Luz Maria Solis.

Larry R. Jones, M.D. is presidentof Primary Care Group/Privivate Practice in Harrisburg. He a also serves as a board member o of the Illinois Academy of Famimily Physicians, and a clinical assisistant professor at Harrisburg Medddical Center. His knowledge anand experience in health issuezies will bring additional strengigth to Voices' campaigns to impiprove conditions for Illinois childdren.

As Assistant Vice President, Customer Support for Nicor Gas and an active member of the Midwest Energy Association, ***Anthony McCain*** brings strong leadership and organizational skills to the board. Outside the workplace, McCain dedicates his time and patience to coaching youth basketball and T-ball leagues.

Lynn Montei is executive director of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, and has been actively involved in childrens issues for several years. Montei has served as co-convener of the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation Cantigny Series Conferences, developer with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, principal-for-a-day at Chicago's Perkins Bass Elementary School and a member of the Leadership Greater Chicago Fellows Association Board. She also displays her dedication to families by mentoring a young Chicago family.

Jean Osborn h has been concerned with early chihildhood education since her unundergraduate days. Currently, shdhe is an educational consultant tono the University of Illinois in Ur/rbana/Champaign. Osborn is alsdso a member of the International R Reading Association, the Americican Educational Research Asssociation, and the National Reading Conference. Her experience in early childhoodsl education will be a great a asset to Voices.

Luz Maria Solis works in the Department of Early Childhood Education for the Chicago Public Schools, and her knowledge of early childhood issues will be especially helpful. In addition to her work as manager of Early Childhood Communication and Community Relations with CPS, Solis is a trustee at Northeastern Illinois University.

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WE WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS, FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS FOR THEIR GENEROSITY DURING THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 16, 1999 THROUGH APRIL 30,1999.

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If you are not listed and believe you should be or are listed incorrectly, please accept our apologies and send a note of correction to:

VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
DEVELOPMENT DEPT.
208 S. LASALLE ST.
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CHICAGO, IL 60604-1103

All corrections will appear in subsequent publications.

Thank you.

based PreKindergarten programs, a number of legislative leaders also called for increased collaboration between school districts and child care programs to ensure all-day, year-long opportunities for children whose parents are working.

Healthy Families

One of the keystones of the *Start Early* Advocacy Agenda is Healthy Families Illinois – a network of programs that provide new parents with voluntary home visits from local family support workers. Healthy Families programs have been shown to foster healthy parent-child relationships, improve child development and reduce child abuse and neglect. Building on this success, Governor Ryan proposed – and the legislature approved – a $4.5 million expansion of the program.

First Year at Home

Learning begins at birth, and parents are a child's first teachers. Yet many low-income working parents are unable to stay at home during even part of the crucial first year of a baby's life. To give those parents an opportunity to spend more time with their newborn children the *Start Early* Advocacy Agenda included a First Year at Home program, which will provide a direct subsidy (in lieu of child care assistance) to families who qualify for the state's subsidized child care program. The bill – sponsored by Senator Dave Syverson and Representative Andrea Moore – was approved overwhelmingly by both chambers. Before the First Year at Home program can be implemented, Governor Ryan must sign the law and specific funding must be designated.

Child Care Accreditation

Left behind but not forgotten is the Child Care Accreditation proposal, which would have provided financial support for child care homes and centers, helping them seek and sustain accreditation from one of the recognized national professional associations. The legislation, sponsored by Representative Elizabeth Coulsen and Senator Christine Rodogno, would have supported homes and centers in their efforts to earn accreditation, and would have been a major step toward improving the overall quality of child care in Illinois. The accreditation legislation was passed by the House of Representatives, but was not considered in the Senate.

Early Intervention

With help from advocates, parents, providers and the Illinois Department of Human Services, state lawmakers adopted a significant rewrite of the statute governing early intervention services. Sponsored by Senator Laura Kent Donahue and Representative Art Tenhouse, SB 1065 amends current legislation to strengthen the early intervention system by emphasizing children's natural environments, broadening the definition of children eligible for Early Intervention services and maintaining Illinois' commitment to serve children with clearly diagnosed developmental delays as well as those who are at risk of delay. The new law passed both chambers and now awaits Governor Ryan's signature.

Improving Kid Care

Working with advocates around the state, Voices helped the Ryan Administration recognize several problems in the KidCare child health insurance program that was launched last year. As a result, in April the Governor introduced a new, simpler KidCare application and a broad outreach program designed to help more children of low-income working families benefit from preventive health care.

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We've moved... but not far!

Voices for Illinois Children has moved to a new location in our building. Our new address is

208 South LaSalle Street,
Suite 1490
Chicago, Illinois 60604-1103

Our telephone and fax lines have not changed.

The Voices newsletter is designed by David Eisenbath and printed by Distinctive Impressions, Inc.

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VOICES
VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
Volume 11, Number 2 SUMMER 1999

Report from Springfield
Important Victories for the *Start Early* Agenda

Voices for Illinois Children and a long list of other advocacy groups collaborated this spring to make sure children were a priority in Springfield. And, even though the Illinois FIRST infrastructure program and other legislation seemed to grab most of the headlines, the *Start Early* Advocacy Agenda resulted in very important progress for children and families in Illinois.

"We can be proud of the gains we made by working together this spring," said Voices President Jerry Stermer. "In addition to important victories in the early childhood arena, the Illinois FIRST program should yield really tangible benefits for children and families. School construction and rehab, improved roads and mass transit and the increase in job opportunities should all spell progress for Illinois families. While we would have preferred the idea of graduated fees for auto registration in the financing of Illinois FIRST, we nevertheless think this program will be good for Illinois. And happily, the legislature adopted the lion's share of our *Start Early* Agenda, which is very good news for Illinois children."

Early Childhood Education

The legislature approved an $18 million increase in funding for the Early Childhood Education Block Grant managed by the Illinois State Board of Education. This 12% increase goes far beyond the 5% boost originally proposed by Governor Ryan. Many legislators from both sides of the aisle went the extra mile to make this critical expansion possible.

While they strongly endorsed school-

(See *AGENDA* on page 6)

Governor George Ryan introduces the new KidCare application – a key element of the *Start Early* Advocacy Agenda.

1999 Start Early Advocacy Agenda Co-Sponsors

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VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
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Inside Voices

✓ KidCare
✓ Children's Charter Update
✓ Network News & More!

Volume II, Number 3 FALL 1999

Kids Share: 50% Towards the Healthy Future of Illinois Children

For the next 25 years, Illinois will receive $9.1 billion – about $350 million each year – through the landmark legal settlement that included 46 states and 5 tobacco companies.

This settlement has created a historic opportunity to improve the lives of Illinois children, and a new coalition called Kids Share wants to ensure that Illinois makes the most of the opportunity.

More than 50 Illinois organizations make up Kids Share, which want to invest 50% of the tobacco settlement funds (about $175 million per year) in community-driven initiatives that encourage children and youth to make good life choices – like avoiding tobacco, alcohol, drugs and violence – and reaching their full potential.

"We have always known that programs for children and youth help lay the foundation for healthy development. However, many of these community programs are in crisis," said Voices for Illinois Children Community Advocacy Associate Kim Fitzgerald. "The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that in the year 2002, the current school-age child care supply will meet as little as 25% of the demand in some urban areas. The tobacco settlement funds would help ensure that the programs are properly staffed, and available for kids around the state."

The organizations in the Kids Share coalition serve communities throughout Illinois, and have seen first hand the benefits of quality programs. They

(See KIDS SHARE on page 4)

Start Early Conference

On October 1st, Voices held the first *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* Professional Development Conference. Over 450 early childhood educators, professionals and community leaders attended the one-day event at the Standard Club in Chicago.

Alicia F. Lieberman, professor of psychology at the University of California in San Francisco and author of *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*, was the keynote speaker.

Voices Chair Lorraine Barba, Voices Leadership Award Recipient Howard Peters and Voices President Jerry Stermer.

Dr. Lieberman spoke on the importance of responding to children, even though we may not fully understand them, as well as the necessity of quality child care and its long term effect on society. "The question, is child care detrimental to the childs relationship with parents should be turned on its head," said Dr. Lieberman. She suggested that the question become "What are the emotional costs to the child of not providing adequate substitute care when both parents work out of the home?"

Another speaker at the conference was Phillip Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Housing Authority. Jackson emphasized the significant role that parents play in the early development of their child. He also talked about the need for community organizations to have the tools that allow them to better serve parents and their children.

Conference participants also heard from the recipient of the Voices for Illinois Children Leadership Award, Howard Peters, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services. Mr. Peters has been a pivotal leader in the effort to consolidate human service programs in Illinois, and to give families better access to services. He has led the effort to increase the availability of child care subsidies for working families, and championed the establishment of the Healthy Families program. Peters has also played a key role in the development of the welfare reform program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

(See START EARLY on page 11)

The McCormick Tribune Foundation has agreed to continue support for the next two years of the *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* Campaign. The Foundation has awarded Voices for Illinois Children with a 4.5 million dollar grant which will support distribution of *Start Early* materials in Chicago and six other communities. The grant will allow Voices to continue promoting the importance of early brain development and to launch the new *Start Early: Learning begins at Birth* integrated media and public awareness campaign. The campaign will focus on bringing new consciousness among communities and policymakers in Illinois.

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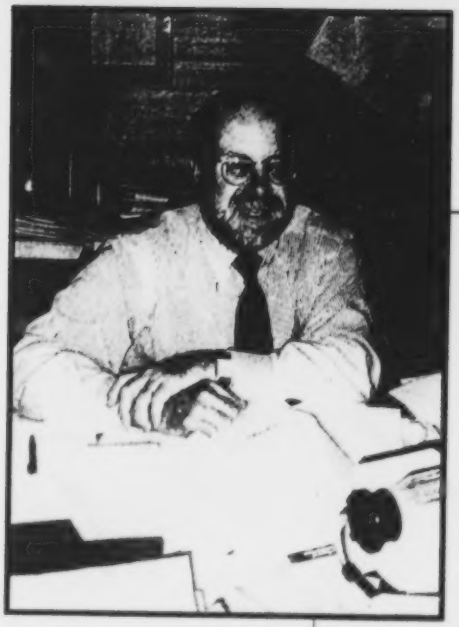

Providing the Kids Share

A Column from Voices' President Jerome Stermer

The recent settlement between 46 states and five tobacco companies will bring a lot of money to the state of Illinois. It will also bring a lot of questions about the wisest ways to invest that money.

Over the next 25 years, Illinois will receive more than $9 billion from the tobacco settlement. Several dozen organizations have joined together in a coalition called Kids Share to encourage Illinois policy makers to make the most of this opportunity by using some of the tobacco funds to support community programs that make a difference in the lives of children.

Kids Share proposes that Illinois invest 50 percent of the tobacco settlement proceeds into community-driven initiatives for children and families, such as quality child care and after-school programs that help keep kids on a path toward success.

The Kids Share plan makes sense because these community programs are a wise – and desperately needed – investment. These programs help kids get a good start in life, but in far too many communities they are understaffed and underfunded. We have an opportunity to provide communities with better and more consistent funding, and we should take advantage of it.

The Kids Share plan would help kids and communities by investing in two areas – innovation and infrastructure. By focusing on innovation, Kids Share will support new efforts and ideas that have developed through collaboration at the community level. Under the Kids Share proposal, after-school and early childhood programs could improve both their quality and availability.

Another essential focus of Kids Share is infrastructure. Many community programs are barely able to provide their own operating budgets each month. By helping organizations make more reliable arrangements for staffing and facilities, Kids Share will ensure that they are able to maintain a long-term presence in the communities they serve.

Kids Share envisions a new, independent fund for community programs that would be responsive to collaborative proposals for innovation and infrastructure. Whether or not the legislature decides to put some of the settlement funds in a trust fund for later use, Illinois policy makers would be wise to earmark a substantial portion of the proceeds for children.

Healthy and well-adjusted kids are essential to the future of our state. Parents play the first and most important role in raising healthy kids, but as the article on page one outlines, quality community programs can make an important contribution as well.

If Illinois is serious about helping kids, Kids Share is the wisest investment strategy for the tobacco settlement. It will help many more kids live long and productive lives, and it will make our state a much healthier place in the long run.

"Healthy and well-adjusted kids are essential to the future of our state."

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Illinois Family Partnership Network

Leaders In Action

IFPN: Encouraging the "Family Voice"

Recognizing that too many local and state policy decisions do not adequately reflect the needs of children, the Illinois Family Partnership Network (IFPN) – a network of parents, human service organizations, state agencies and advocates – was created to help parents develop a leading voice in Illinois. Since the founding of IFPN in 1998, its members have joined together to build more effective ways of involving parents in regional and state policies and decision-making.

"IFPN encourages family involvement because parent opinions are fundamental to improving the outcomes for children, and because family voices are critical in designing successful programs and policies for children," said Gaylord Gieseke, senior projects director for Voices for Illinois Children, an IFPN partner organization.

IFPN uses the resources of its members and partner organizations to connect families to leadership opportunities, community resources, and other parent leaders across the state. The parents help teach agencies and organizations how to develop effective partnerships with family leaders. The parent voices also help agencies know what parents need in their lives, and what policies and programs work best for them.

The IFPN focuses on developing structures to support and nurture parent and family leadership, based on the following beliefs:

- Parents have many interests in common, and will support each other on issues that affect children.
- Active parent and family leaders are needed in many arenas in order to build strong communities and support families.

In June, IFPN held "Get Connected," a regional conference in Aurora, drawing parents and IFPN partners from northern Illinois. The conference – which was conducted in English and Spanish – included workshops on building learning opportunities for families in the community and how to better understand family rights. The event also stimulated discussions on leadership roles parents can take in their communities.

In the same month, IFPN held a regional conference in Mount Vernon, and hosted a reception as part of the "Building on our Strengths, Families, Schools, and Communities" conference, sponsored by the Central Region Illinois State Board of Education and the Department of Children and Family Services Educational Access Project.

More than 150 people attended these events, underscoring how interested parents are in the parent leadership efforts in other communities. "Parents want to hear about the successes of other parents, the obstacles they have encountered, and how they are overcoming them," said Conference Coordinator Cynthia Vessel. "Often, this type of interaction is the best encouragement."

The next IFPN regional conference will be held November 13th in Chicago. Workshops for parents will include subjects from how to become an effective advocate to how to improve sibling relationships. IFPN plans to hold other regional conferences around the state in the next few months.

For more information about IFPN, contact Cynthia Vessel at 312-516-5559.

IFPN in Southern Illinois

The southern region of IFPN is rapidly growing with an average of 10 new members a month and 4 upcoming conferences. The first conference on November 3rd will help parents and agencies motivate family leadership in southern Illinois, while focusing on issues of family and cultural diversity.

If you're interested in joining the southern chapter of the IFPN or would like to attend the November 3rd "Family and Cultural Diversity" conference, please contact Darline Johnson at 618-594-4473.

know that research shows how qquality child care and youth programs help children build self-esteem and confidence, and iincrease the chances that they grow up healthyy.

An example is the research cconducted at the High/Scope Perry Preschool iin Michigan, which provided one of the lonngest assessments of the effects of early childdhood intervention. The study followed 1223 high-risk 3- and 4-year-oids: Some of the kkids participated in a high quality, activve learning program, the others did not. By aage 27, high quality early learning participantts had significantly lower rates of current and l past welfare utilization, criminal activity, anod teen pregnancy. Employment rates and eaarnings were also correspondingly higher for eearly learning program participants.

Kids Share also notes that comprehensive after-school programs will heelp promote health, prevent teen smoking anod curb youth violence. Research has shown tthat 13-year olds left home alone are signifificantly more likely to smoke cigarettes, drinkx alcohol and experiment with drugs than thoose who participate in constructive after-sschool programs. FBI data also reveal that violent juvenile crimes triple in the hour afteer the school bell rings. After-school programss have helped cut crime by as much as 40 to 773 percent in some high-crime neighborhoodss.

By supporting healthy envirooonments that will help children and youth makke responsible decisions, Kids Share proposes tthat the tobacco settlement be used to deter cchildren from picking up cigarettes in the first pplace.

To join the Kids Share coalition, contact Kim Fitzgerald at 312-516-5557.

The Tobacco Settlement in Other States

KANSAS established the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund, and will deposit 100% of the tobacco settlement into the fund. The KEY Fund will support the Children's Initiatives Fund, which will be used for services, projects, the physical and mental health, welfare, safety, and overall well-being of Kansas children.

ALABAMA created the Children's First Trust Fund, to support broad-based, comprehensive approaches to children's development.

FLORIDA announced the Lawton Chiles Endowment Fund for Children and Elders to fund programs with almost $2 billion of the tobacco funds. Funds will be allocated for the Healthy Families program, children's health care, child welfare and community based initiatives.

ALASKA is proposing "Smart Start for Alaska's Children" to improve children's lives through improving health care, increasing the number of home visiting and child protective services, and expanding Head Start.

In August, 2 teens testified to an Illinois Senate Committee considering plans for the tobacco settlement, and talkked about how community programs had helped them:

"When I learned I was pregnant, , I was 15 years old. I didn't know what I was going to do. I had no family members who couldd help me watch my baby. I thought I would have to drop out of high school, but fortunately foor me there was an Early Head Start program in my school. Staff at the program not only tookk care of my baby while I went to classes, but also worked with me to learn how to help my childl be healthy, happy and develop well. The program taught me parenting skills and connected mae to other community resources."

Anastasia Hiller,
teen parent from Early Headd Start (CEDA)

"Homework Hangout was one col the few things that helped me stay off the streets. For 5 years it provided a safe place to spend time and a place to develop my motivational skills. Homework Hangout is still partt of my life – I now attend college and return to Homework Hangout to work and volunteer."

Stephan Dawson,
teen from Homework Hangout in Decatur

Kids Share

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Illinois Center for Violence Prevention
Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Illinois Facilities Fund
Illinois YMCAs Public Policy Committee
Jane Addams Hull House Association
Kiddie Kollege of Fairfield
Lake County Family YMCA
Little Peoples Place
Lutheran Family Mission
Macomb Early Beginnings Program
Marion County Child Development Center
Medallion School Partnerships
Metropolitan Family Services
National Boys & Girls Clubs
National Council of Jewish Women
PSO Child Care Association of Illinois
Rainbow Factory Day Care Center, Inc.
Rogys Child Care Centers
Southwest Youth Collaborative
The Ounce of Prevention Fund
Voices for Illinois Children
Youth Network Council
YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago
YWCA of McLean County
19th District YouthNet

And growing...

The Charter for Illinois Children
A Call to Action

The *Charter for Illinois Children* continues to gain strength and momentum, thanks to individuals and organizations across the state. Various groups have taken the *Charter* to their communities and are beginning to use it to unite people behind its vision and goals. These local actions are building awareness of our shared responsibilities towards the children and families of Illinois.

Local efforts involving the *Charter*:

- Prevent Child Abuse – Illinois is distributing the *Charter* to participants in their state-wide conference
- The Synod Lincoln Trans Presbyterian Church USA is using the *Charter* to guide their decisions about funding community programs
- The Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is in Skokie plans to use the *Charter* as an educational tool when working with its members and the general public
- The Elmhurst Evening Women's Club – in a cooperative endeavor with the Elmhurst Junior Women's Club – has scheduled a day to meet with local organizations to encourage them to endorse the *Charter*
- The Illinois PTA is considering using the *Charter* to increase parent involvement and encourage discussion
- Project Success, Illinois Action for Children, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, Day Care Action Council, Child Care Association of Illinois, and the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs are distributing the *Charter* to all of their members and program sites

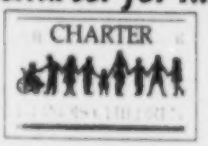
Your participation – as an individual or organization – is vital to making the vision and goals of the *Charter* a reality. There are several ways you can join the *Charter Campaign*:

- Endorse the *Charter* and link your efforts to a particular goal or vision
- Join the "Update List" and receive e-mail or fax bulletins about how communities are using the *Charter* and suggestions for linking your efforts with the *Campaign*
- Become part of the official launch of the *Charter* this winter
- Let other people and organizations in your community know about the *Charter* – present the *Charter* to a local youth, parent or church group, business or civic organization ◆

SEE THE CHARTER ON PAGES 6 AND 7.

TO JOIN THE CAMPAIGN OR LEARN ABOUT WHAT MAY BE HAPPENING IN YOUR COMMUNITY, CONTACT KIM FITZGERALD AT 312-516-5337 OR E-MAIL KFITZGERALD@VOICES4KIDS.ORG.

Groups and Organizations That Have Endorsed the *Charter for Illinois Children*



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Chicago Panel on School Policy
Chicago Youth Agency Partnership
Child Care Association of Illinois
Children and Family Forum of Jo Daviess County
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Illinois Education Association-NEA
Illinois Federation of Teachers
Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs
Illinois Learning Partnership
Illinois Parent Teacher Association
Illinois Public Health Association
Illinois Center for Violence Prevention
Institute on Disabilities and Human Development, UIC
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Marwen Foundation
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Project Success/Statewide
Project Success/Winnebago County Health Department
Project Success/ Chestnut Health Systems
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Reading is Fundamental
Shawnee Adolescent Health Center
South Chicago Consortium
Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Skokie, IL
Springfield Community Federation
Synod Lincoln Trails, Presbyterian Church USA
Transforming Communities
United Way of Rock River Valley
University Professionals of Illinois
Voices for Illinois Children
YMCA's Public Policy Committee

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The Charter for Illinois Children

We are committed to the well being of every child. All children, regardless of circumstances, are vital to the preservation of a vigorous democracy. For children to prosper, we must meet all their basic needs. We must nurture each child through the full and active participation of families and the broader community, including neighborhoods, schools, business, faith communities and government. When children realize their potential and fulfill their dreams, our communities flourish and we are enriched beyond measure.

THE CHARTER FOR

ILLINOIS CHILDREN

We believe in these values and principles and commit to work together to secure the goals of this charter for all the children of Illinois:

Childhood is a sacred time that should be nurtured, celebrated and preserved.

Children's basic needs are family, safety, education, health, economic security and arts, recreation and culture.

All children need to know they belong to loving families and caring communities.

Just as families must support children, communities must support families, and government and business must support both.

All children deserve safe homes, safe schools and safe communities.

Our children's sense of hope and possibility requires equal access to appropriate resources.

Children are prepared for the future when we teach them and they learn to honor and respect diversity.

As children mature, we must seek their voices, engage them, and recognize the freedom they need to shape their destinies.

Children can learn from their mistakes. They deserve systems that give them that opportunity.

Each child is unique.

Every child is entitled to respect.

We must never give up on any child.

FAMILY

OUR VISION: All children are part of loving and safe families. All segments of society share responsibility for supporting families in raising their children and future generations.

GOALS: **Protect the dignity and value the diversity of every family**

Respect and preserve the child's bond with parents, family and community

Support children's moral, spiritual, and ethical development

Provide families with the skills, knowledge and resources to develop, support and sustain loving homes

Empower families to balance the demands of parenting, work and education

Encourage parents to be active in the democratic process and promote the interests of children and families

EDUCATION

OUR VISION: All children receive, as a right, free quality education that fosters their intellectual, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural and creative development.

GOALS: **Foster learning beginning at birth**

Respect and support family as the child's first teacher

Value and invest in teachers as a key component of every child's development

Create an educational system that is a partnership of family, community, and school

Respect and provide for each child's differences and capacities to learn

Support an equitable, fully-funded system that prepares every child for life-long learning

Provide safe, excellent, well-funded schools in every community

Develop the use of schools as community resources during and beyond school hours

Teach children to understand and respect diversity, multiple cultures and languages, and a global perspective

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ARTS, RECREATION AND CULTURE

OUR VISION: All children can express and celebrate their souls and spirits through arts, culture and recreation. c. Children have open time to dream, play and create.

GOALS: **Integrate arts, culture and recreation into the core curriculum of education**

Provide access to a wide variety of affordable, quality arts, culture and recreational programs for children of all ages

Create ongoing opportunities to discover, recover, preserve and celebrate traditions across cultuures

Ensure that museums, libraries, parks and diverse cultural resources are accessible to all childrren

SAFETY

OUR VISION: Every child lives in a physically and emotionally safe environment that cultivates acceptance annd peace.

GOALS: **Promote and ensure safe, non-violent family and community environments**

Protect children from the dangers confronting them

Eliminate children's access to handguns

Teach and practice conflict resolution in all segments of society

Promote social justice through the elimination of prejudice and discrimination

Invest in prevention and intervention programs through legislation, funding, evaluation and resesearch

Increase safe indoor and outdoor neighborhood recreational activities

Promote non-violent, positive images that reflect diversity

Ensure equal protection and due process of law for all children and youth in a system which recognizes their differing capacities and promotes rehabilitation and learning

HEALTH

OUR VISION: Every child and family is guaranteed quality, comprehensive health care. All children live in a a healthy environment that allows them to thrive.

GOALS: **Ensure that no children go hungry**

Ensure quality prenatal care is available for all

Implement an effective health and nutrition education curriculum

Provide integrated, accessible and high quality mental health care

Focus on prevention as a key to preserving the health and well-being of children

Develop partnerships for clean air, water, land and a healthy ecosystem

ECONOMIC SECURITY

OUR VISION: All children have economic security and economic justice. Meaning access to food, clothing, transportation and safe, affordable housing, and that all families have equal opportunities to provide these basic economic needs.s

GOALS: **Provide family-friendly policies in the workplace**

Develop a fair tax policy

Cultivate marketable job skills through training and education

Provide accessible, affordable, high-quality child care

Promote corporate partnerships that strengthen communities

Provide economic security through government initiatives for the children whose parents cannot support them

Enhance access to jobs through sound policies for housing and transportation

The Illinois Fatherhood Initiative has published the new *Illinois Fathers Resource Guide*. The guide focuses on the rights, responsibilities, and rewards of fatherhood. This helpful source offers parenting tips, resources for assistance, and suggestions for developing father-friendly environments and programs.

The Illinois Fatherhood Initiative has been dedicated to raising awareness about the important role that men play in the lives of their children – helping men become better father figures.

To receive more information or join the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative, call 1-800-996-DADS or visit www.4fathers.org.

Developing an Intellect
As a child's brain develops, it becomes possible to acquire new skills

Courtesy of U.S. News & World Report

Birth

At less than a pound, a newborn brain is one third the size of an adults, and trillions of its neural connections remain complete.

3 Months

Brain synapses reach maximum density in areas that control vision. Babies distinguish colors well and track movement smoothly.

6 Months

Growth in the brain area that makes it possible to understand and produce speech is in full swing. Babies start imitating sounds.

12 Months

The hippocampus, seat of memory, has matured enough for toddlers to be able to recall events that happened a few minutes earlier.

18 Months

The child's longer attention span and ability to plan and carry out a course of action hint at the emerging talents of the prefrontal cortex.

24 Months

With increased brainpower at their disposal and experience navigating the world, toddlers can find hidden things on their own.

SAVE THE DATE
Start Early
5K/10K RUN

Sunday, April 9, 2000

Voices 3rd Annual 5k Pledge Run & Walk/10K Run

This annual event is held along Chicagos beautiful Lakefront.

To learn more about this event or to volunteer, contact Jim Perry at (312) 516-5552 or e-mail jperry60@voices4kids.org

Voices

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Network News
Illinois Advocates Develop Creative Programs for Kids, Teens & Parents

Digital House Helps Bridge the "Digital Schoolhouse"

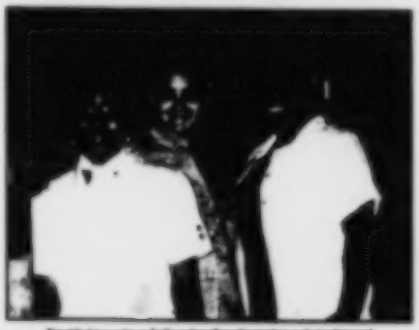
The Digital Schoolhouse Foundation is a non-profit organization giving kids the opportunity to become part of the new and exciting world of technology. The foundation, funded exclusively by the software developer Computer Associates, focuses on children and teachers in low-income communities – where public schools often don't have access to technology.

Digital Schoolhouse provides students and teachers with hands-on Internet training and personal interaction with high-tech professionals. A main goal of the program and its unique Web site is to turn kids on to the power and fun of technology at a young age.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DIGITAL SCHOOLHOUSE VISIT THE OFFICIAL WEB SITE AT WWW.DIGITALSCHOOLHOUSE.COM OR CONTACT DIANE KASTIEL AT 630-620-5000.

A Program for Homeless Teen Mothers & Their Babies

Since its creation in 1997, the Motivated Moms Program has housed over 35 homeless or near homeless teens and their children. The collaborative effort of Best Interest of Children and the Children's Home & Aid Society of Illinois aims to meet the needs of homeless teen parents and their children in Champaign, Ford, and Iroquois counties.



Participants of the Professional and Cultural Development Weekend, held by Best Interest of Children and Children's Home & Aid Society.

The program was created to provide emergency shelter and transitional living arrangements within the community, when teen parents can no longer be reunited with their families. The Motivated Moms Program recognizes that the first three years of a child's life are critical, and makes a special effort to help moms with very young children move to self-sufficiency.

Albany Park Community Center Receives Grant

The Albany Park Community Center in Chicago was awarded an Illinois Prevention 2000 grant called Communities CAN. The grant will be used towards a "*Life Skills Training*" program that will educate both youth and parents on the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse.

The "*Life Skills Training*" encourages family bonding, peer support, and the constant development of parenting skills. Families are taught how to handle stress and anxiety, and how to manage family conflict. The program provides parents and youth with skills that will be essential in fostering a drug-free family.

Voices for Illinois Children

Brenda Baker recently joined Voices as *Start Early* Program Associate. Baker will be responsible for building and maintaining relationships with *Start Early* partner agencies in Chicago. She will also hold *Start Early* trainings with Chicago partners, and help develop new materials for the *Start Early* campaign. Baker has worked for thirteen years with children and families.

Yahaira Familia recently joined Voices as Communications Associate. Familia will be working with a variety of public awareness and grassroots communications campaigns. She will also help design and implement strategies to increase awareness of new programs. Familia attended Loyola University, receiving a degree in Communications.

Amy Gifford recently joined Voices as *Start Early* Program Associate. Gifford will be responsible for building and maintaining relationships with *Start Early* partner agencies statewide. Prior to Voices, she received a Masters of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis and brings two years of social work experience.

Eva Hernandez recently joined Voices as Administrative Assistant, and will help provide effective external communications to Voices' Board, committees and the general public. She brings with her clerical experience from the Cook County Circuit Court and managerial editing experience from her school paper.

IF YOU KNOW A PERSON OR A GROUP THAT YOU THINK SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED FOR GREAT ADVOCACY EFFORTS, CALL **YAHAIRA FAMILIA** AT (312) 516-5564.

VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
NETWORK NEWS
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Chicago, IL
60604-1103

All corrections will appear in subsequent publications.

Thank you.

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START EARLY
(continued from front page)

The *Start Early* conference was an opportunity for social service professionals to share ideas on innovative ways to make the most of their resources. They reviewed programs that help strengthen families by empowering parents, and strategies for supporting parent-child relationships. The conference also offered a variety of workshops, which ranged from promoting attachment and mutual growth between teen mothers, fathers, and their children to creating literacy environments for infants.

President of Families Focus, and Board Member of Zero to Three Bernice Weissbourd with Keynote Speaker Alicia Lieberman.

"The conference was designed to help parents and social service professionals discover the resources that are available to them. It gave us a chance to share ideas with one another, and to develop those ideas through dialogue and conversation," said *Start Early* Project Director Joan Vitale. "The conference was also an opportunity for us to celebrate the amazing contributions that parents and service providers make in the lives of children."

The Professional Development Conference was sponsored by Voices, Erikson Institute and ZERO TO THREE: The National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families. The conference is part of the *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* campaign funded by the McCormick Tribune Foundation, with additional support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Harris Foundation, and the Community Memorial Foundation.

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KidCare Update

The KidCare child health insurance program was launched in 1998 to serve children of low-income families, but many eligible children are still not enrolled. Earlier this year reports indicated that only 32,000 of the 191,000 eligible children and pregnant women in Illinois have enrolled in KidCare, which covers doctor visits, prenatal care, emergency services and prescription drugs for families with incomes up to 185 percent of the poverty level.

As a result, several steps are being taken to expand the KidCare outreach effort.

- *On September 14, Governor George Ryan announced awards of nearly $750,000 each to 29 community agencies and organizations for outreach efforts to locate and enroll hard-to-reach children and pregnant women into KidCare.*
- *This year the state will spend $5 million on KidCare outreach, including $1.6 million in grants to help community organizations, schools and congregations with their sign-up efforts.*
- *The Chicago Public Schools received 450,000 KidCare applications to distribute as part of the 1999 back-to-school campaign. In November parents will be able to sign up for KidCare on Report Card Pick Up Day.*
- *The Department of Public Aid will be working with the Illinois Department of Revenue to target families that are income-eligible for KidCare.*
- *Religious leaders in East St. Louis will be forming a Pastoral Network, to mobilize their congregations to support KidCare registration.*
- *Representatives from pharmaceutical companies will distribute KidCare brochures to physicians.*
- *The Department of Public Aid is now working with private insurance agents to build awareness of the KidCare Rebate option, which reimburses low-income parents for part of the cost of their private health insurance.*
- *There are now a total of 307 KidCare registration sites around the state.*
- *In collaboration with the United Way and the Chicago Public Libraries, Covering Kids Illinois will hold* ***KidCare Sign-Up Day*** *on November 13th from 10:00am to 2:00pm in all 78 Chicago Public Library branches, as well as the libraries in DuPage and Macon counties.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT KIDCARE AND HELP ENROLLING IN THE PROGRAM, CALL THE KIDCARE HELPLINE 800-226-0768 OR VISIT THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AID'S WEBSITE WWW.STATE.IL.US/DPA.

VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
VOICES
Volume II Number 3 Fall 1998

Start Early Statewide Update

In July, Voices for Illinois Children launched the *Start Early. Learning Begins at Birth* parenting materials in East St. Louis. Over 3,000 of the innovative *Start Early* materials have been distributed to East St. Louis partner agencies, helping to ensure that thousands of young moms will get information they need about how to nurture and support their babies.

"The importance of brain development and parent interaction are educational aspects that we need to spend more time focusing on," said Mary Rhoades, day care director of the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, a *Start Early* partner in East St. Louis. "The *Start Early* program and its training have really benefited the children and parents that I already serve."

The launch of the East St. Louis campaign gave Voices staff a unique opportunity to meet with social service organizations and learn about their existing programs. "We were able to learn about the unique services they currently provide, and come up with ideas of how *Start Early* materials could be successfully integrated into their existing programs," said Project Director Joan Vitale.

"Partner agencies have been extremely creative in distributing *Start Early* materials," said Amy Gifford, a *Start Early* program associate. "They are finding ways to combine them with their own programs, which helps ensure that the *Start Early* message is communicated to the young mothers through an established relationship."

The following are examples of the innovative ways in which agencies are getting the *Start Early* video and magazine into the hands of new moms:

- The ROSE Program at Touchette Hospital is giving the *Start Early* materials to moms who attend community baby showers.
- The Urban League of Metro St. Louis is giving the video and magazine as a door prize to moms at their Literacy Fair.
- The Department of Children & Family Services in East St. Louis is including the materials in their training of foster parents and parent liaisons.

As a result of Voices' publicity efforts, the St. Louis *Post Dispatch* and the *Belleville News-Democrat* covered the launch of the East St. Louis campaign – helping many more young moms get the *Start Early* message. More moms in the area will also see the *Start Early* video on local cable access television.

East St. Louis *Start Early* Partners.

In Chicago, the *Start Early* campaign continues to thrive, with over 110 partner agencies – including 11 that have joined in the last three months. "We are growing at a remarkable pace, and we continue to return to our current partner agencies to train new staff and discuss strategies for communicating the *Start Early* messages," said *Start Early* Program Associate Brenda Baker.

Several *Start Early* partners from Chicago recently served as moderators for the *Start Early* Professional Development Conference, helping to facilitate discussions about communicating with infants and empowering mothers.

In October the *Start Early* materials will be taken to moms in Peoria, and in November to Aurora and Lake County.

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